QUALITY EDUCATION:

A Brief Introduction to Recent Research and Professional Literature

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This review has been prepared to accompany Quality Education: A Self-Study Guide for Use in Schools. Items noted in this review can be obtained from a variety of sources. Please contact the Manitoba Education Library for further information or assistance in obtaining copies of the material you wish to use.

ORIENTATION

Recent educational research confirms what we all know from experience: schools which are satisfying and purposeful, which are staffed by effective and determined professionals who use the best practices, and which have positive relationships with the families and communities they serve, are powerful educational environments. It also suggests that we have the potential to create schools which will be productive and satisfying to a degree that most people would not have thought to be attainable just a few years ago.

This research also indicates how this potential can be realized: by consultative leaders who emphasize achievement; by teacher and staff development which encourages the professionalism of educators and supports the efforts of all educators in all schools to adopt as their own the best practices of the best educators in the best schools; and by increasing educationally meaningful student, family and community involvement in education.

EFFECTIVE, SATISFYING SCHOOLS

Everyone shares a strong interest in making schools as effective as possible and in enhancing the quality of education. This will include attention to achievement in basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, as well as providing students with opportunities to explore and develop their interests and talents. At the same time, schools need to be caring and supportive, yet interesting and challenging environments for teachers and students. Such climates in schools are inseparable from the achievement which we all seek.

Guiding the selection of items for inclusion in the bibiliography to follow, then, is a view of education which: emphasizes academic achievement, without reducing attention to personal and social development; is well-organized without being humorless or rigid; and focuses on the knowledge, motivation and skills of effective teachers without making teaching a unidimensional, and therefore grim, pursuit. This is because effective education and the craft of teaching involve being warm and demanding, providing leadership and consulting with others, developing plans and acting spontaneously, being challenging without being unreasonable, creating classrooms which are purposeful, orderly and harmonious environments for teaching and learning.

EDUCATIONAL EFFECTS: A BASIC REFERENCE SHELF OF RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE

The body of research and professional literature on educational effects, instructionally

effective schools and effective classroom practices is immense and growing. Frankly, much of that literature is highly repetitive, and one wonders whether the volume of it can be justified. Nevertheless, that literature is useful to teachers and administrators and important to the further development of schools and school systems. The best of it provides a broader, more valid and more complex undertstanding of school and classroom processes and outcomes, and leads to the conclusion that significant improvements are possible in education.

The following list of sources is very brief and constitutes a basic reference shelf for teachers and administrators.

The Need for Perspective

Because of the quantity of research, and the recent tendency of researchers to concentrate their attention on teacher behavior and school organization to the relative neglect of curriculum, community influences and student behavior, there is a danger of losing perspective on education as a whole.

Among the different theoretical orientations to education, the ecological view is the most encompassing and persuasive, for it shows how the different parts of an educational system--schools and communities, teachers and students and families--interact to shape the outcomes of schooling. This view is central to Brandwein's Memorandum: On Renewing Schooling and Education (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovitch, 1983). Goodlad's book, A Place Called School (New York: McGraw Hill, 1984), is developed without this ecological orientation but leads to the same conclusion. It is a superior source of information on public education and contains many useful suggestions for "improving the schools we have."

Perspectives on the contribution of families and students to the processes and outcomes of schooling are to be found in: Clarke, Familiy Life and School Achievement (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Marjoribanks, Ethnic Families and Childrens' Achievement (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979); and Ogbu, The Next Generation: An Ethnography of Education in an Urban Neighborhood (New York: Academic Press, 1974). These sources emphasize the internal dynamics of families and make it clear, for example, that it is family attitudes and orientations rather than the structural features of families which influence student achievement and behavior in schools. They also suggest that these attitudes and orientations can be regarded as the "alterable cuuriculum of the family" and can be influenced through a variety of programs of family education and development.

The ecological view implies as well that schools are able to influence families and communities--in any ecology it is the response to a condition, and not just the condition itself, which shapes outcomes. The power of schools to respond positively, to what in certain situations can be otherwise "handicapping" conditions, is summarized in Walberg's "Improving the Productivity of America's Schools" (Educational Leadership, May, 1984, 19-27).

General Bibliographies

Useful compilations of reference materials are to be found in several published bibliographies, including: Babb, Annotated Bibliography on Ecological Theory of Teaching (San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1978, ED 218 255); Gillis and Moll, Teacher Effectiveness Research, Parts One and Two: General Works and Special Works (Ottawa: The Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1984, ED 249 192, Ed 249 193); Powell and Beard, Teacher Effectiveness: An Annotated Bibliography and Guide to Research (New York: Garland Press, 1984); and Vasquez, Factors that Influence Learning Among Minority Youth: A Partial Bibliography (Los Angeles: California State University, 1981).

Comprehensive Studies of Instructionally Effective Schools

A great many studies of instructionally effective schools have been conducted in the last decade, concluding that schools make an important difference to student achievement. The findings of many of these are now widely familiar to educators, documenting that effective schools: have clear goals and emphasize the mastery of basic skills by all students; have an orderly and harmonious climate; are staffed by professionals who accept responsibility for student learning and are determined to achieve the best possible results; have ways of doing things that are consistent throughout the school; have regular and frequent contacts with parents as well as parent support for the goals of the school; have mechanisms for monitoring student achievement and using achievement information for the purposes of planning, and replanning, instruction; and have achievement-oriented leadership and teachers who are continually involved in their own development. Among the best known and most representative of the range of inquiries are: Brookover and others, School Social Systems and Student Achievement (New York: Praeger, 1979); and Rutter and others, Fifteen Thousand Hours (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

A very different tradition in the school effects research is exemplified by Galton and Simon's Progress and Performance in the Primary Classroom (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980) and several other very fine publications in the ORACLE series. Their work is notable for its broad and deep look at life in classrooms, and for its reliance on observational methods of collecting information.

Community Influences

Community influences on educational outcomes have a been a preoccupation of educators, reinforced through the work of Coleman and his colleagues, Equality of Educational Opportunity (Washington, D.C.: The U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966) which concluded that ". . . schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background or context." Some of the more recent work in this area--that of Clarke, Marjoribanks, Ogbu and Walberg--has already been cited. Also worth careful attention are: Bronfenbrenner, The Ecology of Human Development (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); and Ogbu, "Schooling in the Ghetto: An Ecological Perspective on Community and Home Influences" (Paper presented at the National Institute of Education

Follow Through Conference, Philadelphia, 1981, ED 252 270). Bronfenbrenner's book, although difficult, is especially rewarding for its insights into how links among communities, families and schools can be reshaped with the development of young children in mind. Ogbu's work has special significance for those who are working with adolescents from visible minority groups.

Guidelines for enhancing the extent and educational relevance of parent and community involvement in education can be found in: Becker, Parent Involvement: A Review of Research and Principles of Effective Practice (Urbanna, Illinois: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, 1984, ED 247 032); and Pennsylvania State Department of Education, Parent Involvement Handbook (Harrisburg: The Department, 1984).

Reviews of Research on Teaching

The quantity of research on teaching is so large that it is impractical for most persons to remain current with all recent work. In practice this means that most people have to rely, to some extent at least, on reviews which attempt to summarize and synthesize the work of various scholars working within and outside of education. The best of these reviews are comprehensive in their discussion of teacher and student behavior in classrooms, are full of classroom examples and interpret life and work in schools and classrooms from several points of view. The most comprehensive review is Wittrock (ed.), The Third Handbook of Research on Teaching (New York: Macmillan, 1986). Other very useful reviews include: Brophy and Good, Teacher Behavior and Student Achievement (East Lansing: Michigan State University, Institute for Research on Teaching, 1984, ED 251 422); Good, "Teacher Effectiveness in the Elementary School" (Journal of Teacher Education, March-April, 1979, 52-63); Gage, The Scientific Basis of the Art of Teaching (New York: Columbia University, Teachers College Press, 1978); and Peterson and Walberg (eds.), Research on Teaching (Berkeley: McCutchan, 1979). It is worth noting that most of this research focuses on teacher behaviors and strategies which appear to be related to student achievement in literacy and numeracy as measured by standardized achievement tests. Nevertheless, many of the main findings of this research--for example, the importance of well-organized instruction, with clear purposes aimed at student understanding and not memorization, and of maintaining momentum, and providing prompt feedback to students--coincide with experience and appear applicable across grade levels, subjects, and philosophies of teaching.

Teacher Expectations

The positive influence of high but reasonable teacher expectations on student achievement is now well established. The best known study is still Rosenthal and Jacobsen's Pygmallion in the Classroom (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968). The work of Glauset and Gaynor, "The Dynamics of Effective and Ineffective Schooling" (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Los Angeles, 1981), although difficult, is important for its attempt to explore the processes through which teacher expectations change and have an influence on achievement. Glauset and Gaynor postulate that, in schools which are least effective teacher expectations decline to meet observed levels

of achievement, whereas in schools which are most effective, high expectations are maintained even though initial levels of student achievement may be low. Also useful for its exploration of expectancy processes, including how expectancy prone teachers with high control needs might react to students, is Cooper's "Pygmallion Grows Up: A Model for Teacher Expectation Communication and Performance Influence," (Review of Educational Research, Summer, 1979, 389-410).

Reading and Language

Learning to read, write and communicate are central parts of everyone's idea of going to school and crucial to success in education at all levels. It follows that it is especially important that language development and instruction in reading and writing be effective. See: Anderson and others, Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the National Commission on Reading (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Education, 1985).

At the moment most widely recommended is the laguage development approach. See: Smith, Reading Without Nonsense (New York: Columbia University, Teachers College Press, 1978); the California State Department of Education's Schooling and Language Minority Students (Sacramento: The Department, 1984, ED 249 773) which is an excellent reference, incorporating theoretical and empirical material as well as useful suggestions for classroom practice; and Trosky and Wood, The Writing Process (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education, Monographs in Education, 1984).

For many students, and particularly those from linguistic minorties, English language development is a pre-requisite to reading and to educational success; the failure to acquire English language skills is a primary source of academic difficulty. See the California State Department of Education's report just noted, as well as Steinberg and others, Dropping Out Among Language Minority Youth: A Review of the Literature (Los Alamitos, California: National Center for Bilingual Research, 1982, ED 241 831).

Classroom Management

The development and maintenance of an orderly, purposeful and harmonious climate, marked by enthusiasm for learning in classrooms is necessary for effective teaching. Kounin's work in this area, although conducted more than fifteen years ago, is still of primary importance; see his Discipline and Group Management in Classrooms (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970). Kounin's descriptions of the processes by which teachers, for example, make smooth transitions from one activity to another and are able to maintain contact with the whole class even when working with individual students are especially useful. More recent sources include: Emmers, Classroom Management: Research and Implications (Austin, Texas: Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, 1984, ED 251 448); Jones and Jones, Comprehensive Classroom Management (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1985); and materials on time management such as those listed later in this bibliography.

Mastery and Cooperative Learning

Two systematic approaches to teaching and learning which have been extensively studied and which have been shown to have important influences on student achievement are mastery learning and cooperative learning. For information on mastery learning, which begins with the premise that virtually all students can master basic skills to a challenging level given time and appropriate instruction, see: Guskey and Gates, "A Synthesis of Research on Group-Based Mastery Learning Programs" (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association, Chicago, 1985); and Martin, Mastering Instruction (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1983).

For information on cooperative learning review: Slavin, "Cooperative Learning," (Review of Educational Research, Summer, 1980, 315-342); Slavin, Cooperative Learning (New York: Longmans, 1983); and Slavin, Student Team Learning: An Overview and Practical Guide (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1983). Cooperative learning is a highly organized approach to instruction which involves students helping each other learn. Its demonstrated achievement benefits are significant: using this approach two-thirds of all students reach levels of achievement now attained by only fifty per cent, and most studies also report significant improvements in student social attitudes and behavior as well as self-concept.

Time Management

Time-on-task, the quality of learning time and the amount of time devoted to instruction have received a good deal of attention in the academic and professional literature as well as in reports on education and the public media. All indicate that the use of time varies widely among schools and classrooms and that, while time is neither a prime determinant nor a weak correlate of achievement, the most effective classrooms and schools are generally those which begin on time, run their full length and otherwise make the best possible use of the time available to them. One recent review of this area is: Karweit, "Time-on-Task Reconsidered: Synthesis of Research on Time and Learning" (Educational Leadership, May, 1984, 32-36). A second review which also contains many examples and useful suggestions for improved classroom practice (including sponges through which time that might be wasted is put to good use) is Stallings, "Effective Use of Classroom Time" (1984, ED 251 973).

Grouping and Individual Seatwork

It is common practice in many classrooms to group students homogeneously for purposes of instruction, as well as to assign individual seatwork to students. Recent research suggests the need for caution in these practices, pointing out that the most effective classrooms seem to be the ones in which teachers spend greater amounts of time in interaction with the whole class. It is important to understand that this interaction with the whole class does not mean lecturing alone but includes demonstrations, conducting discussions, questionning, reteaching and so on. Nor does this research imply that teachers should not group students or assign individual seatwork at all: it does suggest that these practices should be reduced, perhaps to no more than about forty per cent of the available time. See, for example: Galton

and Simon, Progress and Performance in the Primary Classroom (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980); Raze, Overview of Research on Ability Grouping (San Mateo, California: County Office of Education, 1984, ED 252 927); and Brophy and Good, Teacher Behavior and Student Achievement (East Lansing: Michigan State University, Institute for Research on Teaching, 1984, ED 251 422).

Homework

One classroom practice which currently is controversial but which, when well done, is positively related to educational achievement is homework. Research findings, especially at the elementary level, are clear: homework makes an important contribution to achievement, provided that it: is planned as part of a lesson, does not take too much time to complete (benefits diminish after one-half hour), is clearly understood by students, is designed to reinforce what has been learned in classrooms and to have a high probability of success, and is promptly reviewed and returned to students with written comments. When one or more of these conditions are not met, homework may actually impede educational success. There are, of course, different types of homework, according to objectives which have been planned by the teacher: practice, preparation, extension and creativity. While there are some differences among subjects and levels, these are not as great as many people imagine them to be: for example, at the high school level it is reasonable to expect students to do major projects for homework, but it is very helpful if these are broken down into smaller and more manageable parts on which students receive prompt corrective feedback as they proceed. For a bibliography of opinion, experience and recent research on this topic, see Foyle and Bailey, "Homework: Selected References" (1984, ED 250 275). The most useful synthesis of the research on homework is that of Paschal, Weinstein and Walberg, "The Effects of Homework on Learning: A Quantitative Synthesis" (Journal of Educational Research, November-December, 1984, 97-104).

Promotion and Retention

An unfortunate reality for some students is grade retention or failure. This practice, and its assumed opposite "social promotion," are sensitive topics on which the research evidence is unclear. The inference can be drawn that neither is desirable or a substitute for carefully planned programs of remedial and catch-up education. Recent perspectives from educational research can be found in: Cooke and Stammer, "Grade Retention and Social Promotion Practices" (Childhood Education, March-April, 1985, 302-308); Johnson, "Synthesis of Research on Grade Retention and Social Promotion" (Educational Leadership, May, 1984, 66-68); and Schuyler, "Does Retention Help? Perspectives After Three Years" (Austin, Texas: Austin Independent School District, 1985).

Teacher and Staff Development

Effective programs of teacher and staff development are central elements of any plan to make schools more productive and satisfying environments for students and teachers. For recent views on these topics, as well as examples of effective programs of teacher and staff development, see: Barnett, "Peer-Assisted Leadership: Using Research to Improve Practice"

(The Urban Review, 17,1, 1985, 47-64); Griffin (ed.), Staff Development (Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Lieberman and Miller (eds.), Staff Development: New Demands, New Realities, New Perspectives (New York: Columbia University, Teachers College Press, 1979); and Little, "Designs, Contexts and Consequences in the Real World of Staff Development" (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, 1984).

The Role of the Principal

The important role that the principal plays in school improvement is well known through experience and has been documented extensively in educational research. Just as effective classrooms are characterized by enthusiasm for learning, effective schools have principals who believe in their schools, who have high expectations for themselves and the teachers with whom they work, who create a high level of morale among teachers, and who consult with their teachers as well as lead. Perspectives on the elementary principalship can be found in: Leithwood and Montgomery, "The Role of the Elementary School Principal in Program Improvement" (Review of Educational Research, Fall, 1982, 302-339); and Blumberg and Greenfield, The Effective Principal (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1980).

Insights into the role of the high school principal can be obtained in Lightfoot, The Good High School (New York: Basic Books, 1983). Lightfoot's work is important in another way as well--it properly tempers or softens the implication of much research that assertiveness is one of the necessary attributes of an effective principal.

System Effects

While most of the research concentrates on improvements at the school and classroom level, it would be wrong to conclude that system-wide environments are unimportant to school improvement programs. Useful discussions of the role of superintendents and other central office personnel as well as of system-wide climates of expectations and supports which foster improvement can be found in: Cuban, "Transforming the Frog into a Prince: Effective Schools Research, Policy and Practice at the District Level" (Harvard Educational Review, May, 1984, 129-151); and Huberman, "School Improvement Strategies that Work: Some Scenarios" (Educational Leadership, November, 1983, 23-27).